

Summary

Main Features

NOTES

ABOUT THIS PUBLICATION

This publication presents information about people aged 15 years and over who are not in the labour force: that is, neither employed nor unemployed. The data measure the potential supply of labour not reflected in employment and unemployment statistics, and measure the characteristics of that potential supply.

Statistics in this publication were obtained from the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey, conducted throughout Australia in September 2011 as a supplement to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS).

Information collected in the survey includes details about whether people not in the labour force wanted to work, reasons why they were not actively looking for work, or were not available for work, and their main activity while not in the labour force.

Many people not in the labour force could be considered to have some attachment to the labour force. For example, they may want a job, but for a variety of reasons are not actively looking for work even though they are available to start a job. There is an expectation that many of these people could move into the labour force in the short term, or could do so if labour market conditions changed.

ROUNDING

As estimates have been rounded, discrepancies may occur between sums of the component items and totals.

INQUIRIES

For further information about these and related statistics, contact the National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070 or Labour Supplementary Surveys Section on Canberra (02) 6252 7206, <labour.statistics@abs.gov.au>.

Conceptual framework

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

PERSONS NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE AGED 15 YEARS AND OVER

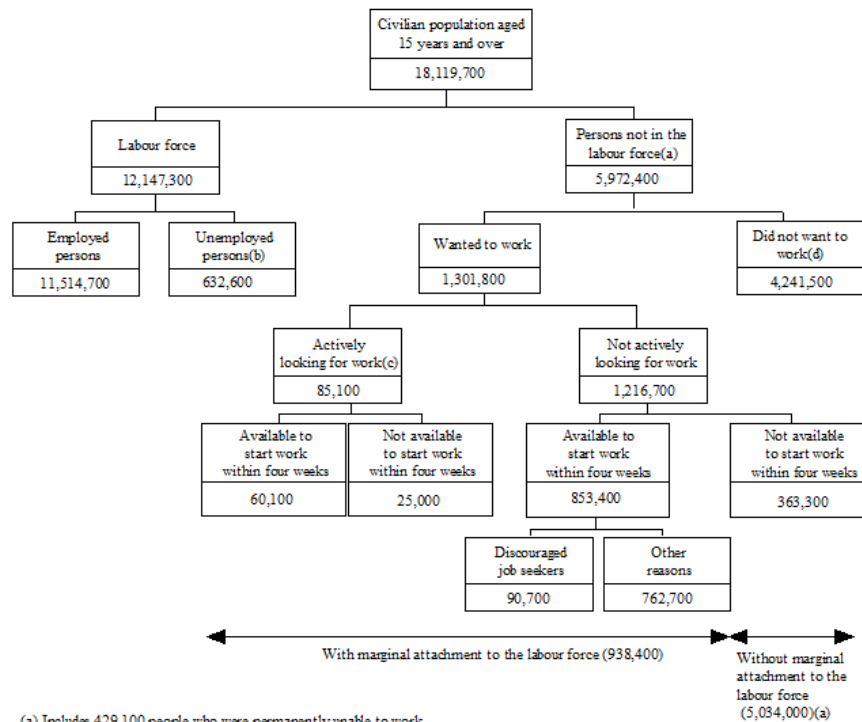
Persons not in the labour force can be divided into those who are marginally attached to the labour force, and those who are not. Persons who are marginally attached to the labour force satisfy some, but not all, of the criteria required to be classified as unemployed.

Persons not in the labour force are considered to be marginally attached to the labour force if they:

- wanted to work and were actively looking for work (but, unlike unemployed people, were not available to start work in the reference week); or
- wanted to work and were not actively looking for work but were available to start work within four weeks.

Persons not in the labour force are not marginally attached to the labour force if they:

- did not want to work; or
- wanted to work but were not actively looking for work and were not available to start work within four weeks.



Australia's Discouraged Job Seekers

Australia's Discouraged Job Seekers

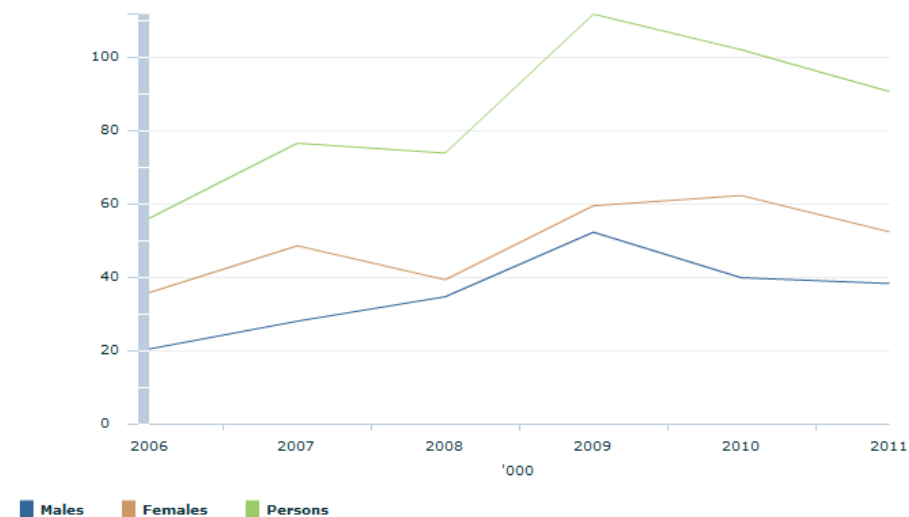
Overview

People who are not in the labour force account for one third (6 million) of working age Australians. While the proportion of people in this group has remained relatively stable since 2006 at 33%, this is not the case for discouraged job seekers. With population growth, the number of people not in the labour force has grown from 5.7 million in 2009 to 6 million in 2011, while the number of discouraged job seekers has fallen from 111,800 in 2009 to 90,700 in 2011. Discouraged job seekers are people who are available for work and want to work, but were not looking for a job because they believed that they would not find a job for a number of reasons, such as being considered to be too old by employers or lacking the necessary schooling, training, skills or experience.

Discouraged job seekers

Discouraged job seekers accounted for 11% (90,700) of the 853,400 people not in the labour force who were available to start work within four weeks but were not looking in 2011. The number of discouraged job seekers in Australia peaked in 2009 following an increase by 53,700 people between 2006 and 2009. This number has since decreased to 90,700 in 2011.

Discouraged job seekers, 2006-2011



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Australian Bureau of Statistics

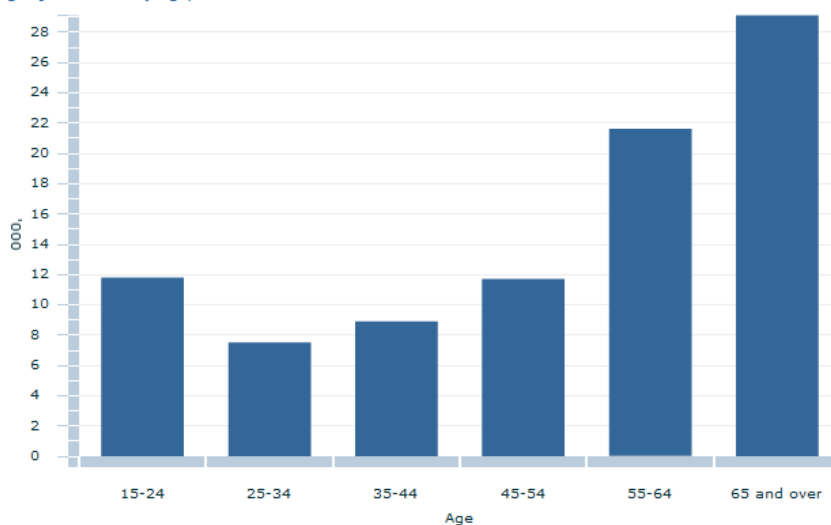
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Source(s): Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia

Discouraged job seekers by age group

In 2011 the age groups of people containing the largest number of discouraged job seekers were 65 years and over (32%) and 55–64 years (24%), showing that over half of discouraged job seekers (56%) were aged over 55 years. Comparatively, 13% of discouraged job seekers were aged 15–24 years (8,000 men and 3,900 women).

Discouraged job seekers by Age, 2011



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Australian Bureau of Statistics

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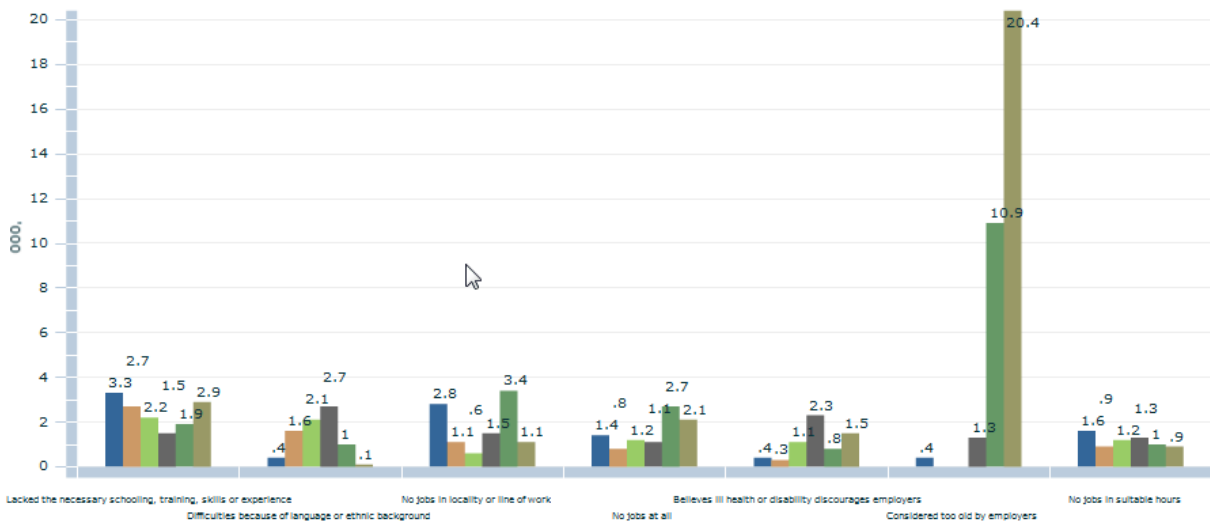
Source(s): Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia

The percentage of female discouraged job seekers has remained higher than the percentage of male discouraged job seekers since 2006, with women consistently accounting for over 50% of discouraged job seekers from 2006 to 2011 (63% in 2006, 53% in 2009 and 58% in 2011). For women in 2011, the age groups containing the most discouraged job seekers were 70 and over (17%), 60-64 years (16%) and 45-54 years (15%).

Reasons for being discouraged

The most common reason for not looking for work reported by discouraged job seekers aged 55 years and over was that they were 'Considered too old by employers' (62%). While the number of people who believe that they are considered too old by employers increased in 2007, peaking in 2009, this number has since declined. People aged 45–54 years most commonly reported that they had given up looking for work because they had 'Difficulties due to language or ethnic background' (23%). Job seekers aged between 15 and 45 years most frequently reported that they were discouraged because they 'Lacked the necessary skills, training or experience' (29%).

Main reason not looking for a job, by Age, 2011



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Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Source(s): Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia

The story of discouraged job seekers

People not in the labour force aged 55 years and over account for more than half of the total number of discouraged job seekers in Australia. Of these discouraged job seekers 55 years and over, 62% believe that employers consider them to be too old and as a result, have stopped actively look for work. In September 2011, there were 40,000 people aged between 15 and 54 years who were discouraged job seekers. Overall the number of discouraged job seekers has decreased since 2009, following the increase of discouraged job seekers during the period of 2008 - 2009.

Summary of Findings

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

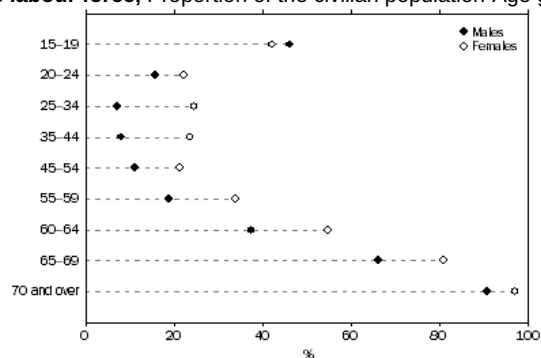
OVERVIEW

In September 2011, there were almost 6 million people aged 15 years and over who were not in the labour force. This represented 33% of the civilian population aged 15 years and over. Since September 2008, people aged 15 years and over who were not in the labour force comprised approximately one-third of the civilian population.

Of those people not in the labour force:

- 60% were women;
- 22% wanted to work (23% of women not in the labour force and 20% of men not in the labour force); and
- 16% were aged 15-24 years, 40% were aged 25-64 years and 31% were aged 70 years and over.

Persons not in the labour force, Proportion of the civilian population-Age group (years)-By sex



The proportion of men and women who were not in the labour force varied according to age. In the 15-19 year age group, 46% of men and 42% of women were not in the labour force. In each of the remaining age groups, there was a higher proportion of women than men not in the labour force. The proportion of men not in the labour force was lowest for those aged 25-34 years (7%) and 35-44 years (8%). By comparison, the proportion of women not in the labour force was lowest for those aged 45-54 years (21%) and 20-24 years (22%).

WITH MARGINAL ATTACHMENT TO THE LABOUR FORCE

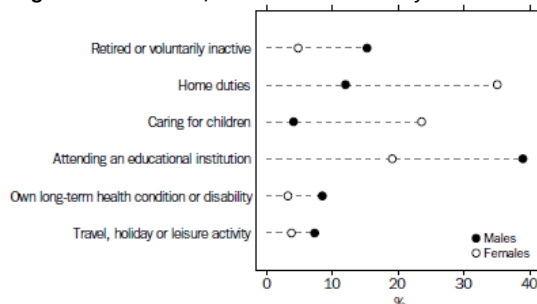
In September 2011, there were 938,400 people with marginal attachment to the labour force, representing approximately 16% of people not in the labour force. Of those with marginal attachment to the labour force:

- 587,100 (63%) were women;
- 853,400 (91%) were not actively looking for work;
- 276,400 (29%) were aged 15-24 years; and
- 186,300 (20%) had never held a job.

The largest group of men with marginal attachment to the labour force were aged 15-19 years (29%), followed by 20-24 years (12%) and 35-44 years (11%). By comparison, the largest group of women with marginal attachment to the labour force were aged 25-34 years (24%), followed by women aged 35-44 (21%) and 45-54 years (14%).

Main activity when not in the labour force

Persons with marginal attachment, Selected main activity when not in the labour force-By sex



The most commonly reported main activity for men with marginal attachment to the labour force was 'Attending an educational institution' (39% of men compared to 19% of women), whereas for women it was 'Home duties' (35% of women compared to 12% of men) and 'Caring for children' (24% of women compared to 4% of men).

There were 247,600 women not in the labour force because they were caring for children who wanted to work but were not actively looking for work. They cited preferring to look after children and cost of child care as the main reasons for not looking for work.

Time since last job

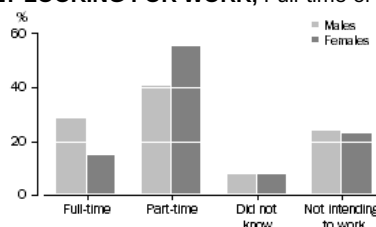
In September 2011, 80% (752,100) of people with marginal attachment to the labour force had worked before. Just over 50% had worked less than three years ago and 31% had worked less than 12 months ago.

Not actively looking for work - Intention to enter the labour force in the next 12 months

There were 853,400 people who were marginally attached to the labour force and not actively looking for work, of whom 617,600 (72%) indicated that they intended to, or might enter the labour force in the next 12 months. Of those who were marginally attached and intended to, or might enter the labour force in the next 12 months:

- 390,600 (63%) were women, 76% of whom expressed an interest in working part-time;
- 50,800 (8%) were discouraged job seekers; and
- 423,800 (69%) reported that they would prefer to work part-time.

PERSONS NOT ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR WORK, Full-time or part-time preference-By sex



Of women with marginal attachment to the labour force who were not actively looking for work, 296,700 (55%) preferred part-time work, while 78,600 (15%) preferred full-time work. For men, 127,000 (40%) preferred part-time work and 89,500 (28%) preferred full-time work. Of those with marginal attachment who were not actively looking for work, 23% reported that they were not intending to work.

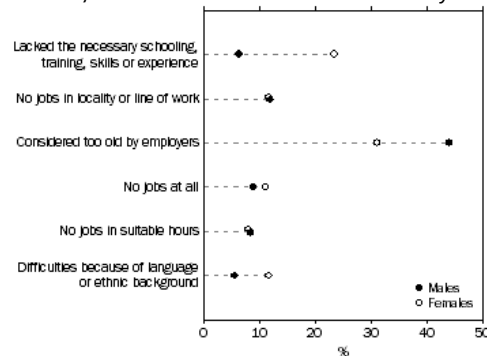
Discouraged Job Seekers

In September 2011, there were 90,700 discouraged job seekers aged 15 years and over, compared with 102,100 in 2010. Of the 90,700 discouraged job seekers:

- 50,700 (56%) were aged 55 years and over;

- 52,400 (58%) were women;
- 79,700 (86%) had worked before;
- 13,600 had worked in the previous 12 months (16% of men and 14% of women);
- 16,400 last worked between 1 year and under 3 years ago (17% of men and 19% of women);
- 50,800 (56%) intended to or might enter the labour force in the next 12 months; of whom
 - 63% preferred to work part-time; and
 - 25,500 had looked for work in the previous 12 months (26% of men and 29% of women).
- 37,100 (40%) did not intend to enter the labour force in the next 12 months, of whom 60% stated the main reasons they were not actively looking for work was because they were 'Considered too old by employers'.

Discouraged job seekers, Selected main reason for not actively looking for work-By sex



For discouraged job seekers, the most commonly reported main reason for not actively looking for work was 'Considered too old by employers' (36%). This was followed by 'Lacked necessary training, skills or experience' (16%) and 'No jobs in locality or line of work' (12%).

Main reason for not actively looking for work - Other reasons

There were 762,700 people who were not discouraged job seekers, who wanted to work, but were not actively looking for work and were available to start work within four weeks. These people account for 81% of all people with marginal attachment to the labour force.

Persons not actively looking for work-Other reasons, Selected main other reason for not actively looking for work-By sex



Of the 762,700 people who were not discouraged job seekers, the most commonly reported main reason for not actively looking for work, by men, was 'Attending an educational institution' (35%), followed by 'Own long-term health condition or disability' (15%). By comparison, the most commonly reported main reason for women was 'Caring for children' (30%), followed by 'Attending an educational institution' (18%).

WITHOUT MARGINAL ATTACHMENT TO THE LABOUR FORCE

In September 2011, there were just over 5 million people (2 million men and 3 million women) aged 15 years and over without marginal attachment to the labour force. Of those without marginal attachment:

- 84% reported that they 'Did not want to work', or 'Did not know' if they wanted to work;
- 7% 'Wanted to work but were not actively looking for work and were not available to start work within four weeks';
- 9% were 'Permanently unable to work';
- 49% were aged 65 years and over (53% of men and 46% of women);
- 16% were aged 55-64 years old; and
- 17% never had a job, of whom 59% were women.

Main activity when not in the labour force

For those without marginal attachment, the most commonly reported main activity when not in the labour force was 'Retired or voluntarily inactive' (33%) followed by 'Home duties' (21%). For men, the most common main activity when not in the labour force was 'Retired or voluntarily inactive' (41%). For women without marginal attachment, the main activity when not in the labour force was 'Home duties' (30%) followed by 'Retired or voluntarily inactive' (28%).

Time since last job

In September 2011, there were 4.2 million people without marginal attachment to the labour force who had previously had a job. Of these:

- 55% last worked 10 or more years ago; and
- 20% last worked less than 3 years ago.

About this Release

Persons not in the labour force are people who are neither employed nor unemployed in a particular reference period. They are divided into those with marginal attachment to the labour force and those without marginal attachment to the labour force, based on whether they wanted to work, whether they actively looked for work in the last 12 months and whether they were available for work.

The Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey collects a range of information about people not in the labour force, including the reasons why they were not actively looking for work or were not available for work, their main activity while not in the labour force, whether they have worked previously and if so, time since their last job, occupation in their last job and the reasons for ceasing their last job.

Estimates can be cross-classified by labour force demographics such as state, sex, marital status and birthplace.

Explanatory Notes

Explanatory Notes

EXPLANATORY NOTES

INTRODUCTION

1 The statistics in this publication were compiled from data collected in the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey that was conducted throughout Australia in September 2011 as a supplement to the monthly Labour Force Survey (LFS). Respondents to the LFS who were in scope of the supplementary survey were asked further questions.

2 The publication Labour Force, Australia, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0) contains information about survey design, sample redesign, scope, coverage and population benchmarks relevant to the monthly LFS, which also applies to supplementary surveys. It also contains definitions of demographic and labour force characteristics, and information about telephone interviewing relevant to both the monthly LFS and supplementary surveys.

CONCEPTS SOURCES AND METHODS

3 The conceptual framework used in Australia's LFS aligns closely with the standards and guidelines set out in Resolutions of the International Conference of Labour Statisticians. Descriptions of the underlying concepts and structure of Australia's labour force statistics, and the sources and methods used in compiling these estimates, are presented in Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001).

SCOPE

4 The scope of the LFS is restricted to people aged 15 years and over and excludes the following people:

- members of the permanent defence forces;
- certain diplomatic personnel of overseas governments, customarily excluded from the Census and estimated populations;
- overseas residents in Australia; and
- members of non-Australian defence forces (and their dependants).

5 Students at boarding schools, patients in hospitals, residents of homes (e.g. retirement homes, homes for people with disabilities), and inmates of prisons are excluded from all supplementary surveys.

6 This supplementary survey was conducted in both urban and rural areas in all states and territories, but excluded people living in Indigenous communities in very remote parts of Australia.

COVERAGE

7 The estimates in this publication relate to people covered by the survey in September 2011. In the LFS, coverage rules are applied which aim to ensure that each person is associated with only one dwelling and hence has only one chance of selection in the survey. See Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0) for more details.

SAMPLE SIZE

8 Supplementary surveys are not conducted on the full LFS sample. Since August 1994 the sample for supplementary surveys has been

restricted to no more than seven-eighths of the LFS sample.

9 The initial sample for the September 2011 LFS consisted of 36,312 private dwelling households and special dwelling units. Of the 29,288 private dwelling households and special dwelling units that remained in the survey after sample loss (e.g. households selected in the survey which had no residents in scope for the LFS, vacant or derelict dwellings and dwellings under construction), approximately 27,365 or 93.4% were fully responding to the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey. The number of completed interviews obtained from these private dwelling households and special dwelling units (after taking into account scope, coverage and subsampling exclusions) was 16,456.

RELIABILITY OF THE ESTIMATES

10 Estimates in this publication are subject to sampling and non-sampling errors:

- Sampling error is the difference between the published estimate and the value that would have been produced if all dwellings had been included in the survey. For more information, see the Technical Note.
- Non-sampling errors are inaccuracies that occur because of imperfections in reporting by respondents and interviewers, and errors made in coding and processing data. These inaccuracies may occur in any enumeration, whether it be a full count or a sample. Every effort is made to reduce the non-sampling error to a minimum by careful design of questionnaires, intensive training and supervision of interviewers, and efficient processing procedures.

SEASONAL FACTORS

11 The estimates are based on information collected in the survey month, and, due to seasonal factors, may not be representative of other months of the year.

CLASSIFICATIONS USED

12 Occupation data are classified according to the ANZSCO-Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, First Edition, Revision 1 (cat. no. 1220.0).

13 Country of birth data are classified according to the Standard Australian Classification of Countries (SACC), Second Edition (cat. no. 1269.0).

COMPARABILITY OF TIME SERIES

14 The Labour Force Survey estimates, and estimates from the supplementary surveys, are calculated in such a way as to sum to independent estimates of the civilian population aged 15 years and over (population benchmarks). These population benchmarks are based on Estimated Resident Population (ERP) data. Generally, revisions are made to population benchmarks after each five-yearly Census of Population and Housing (Census), however revisions were made to the population benchmarks from July 2010, including those used for the 2011 Persons not in the Labour Force Survey, to reflect revisions to ERP. For more details on the population benchmarks, see the Explanatory Notes in Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0), and for details about the revisions made, see the article in the September 2010 issue of Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0).

15 Persons Not in the Labour Force Surveys conducted up to and including September 1987 included all people aged 15 years and over. From September 1988 to September 2004, the survey excluded all people aged 70 years and over.

16 The scope of the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey was expanded in September 2005 to include all people aged 15 years and over. This change resulted in about 1.6 million extra people coming within the scope of this survey. Users need to exercise caution when comparing the estimates prior to 2005 with subsequent years. Direct comparisons should only be made where the populations are the same.

17 From September 2006, estimates of the number of people not in the labour force because they were caring for children, include people whose youngest child was aged 12 years and under. Previously questions relating to the care of children were only asked of people with children aged 11 years and under. This change was made to ensure consistency with other ABS surveys. Users need to exercise care when comparing the estimates in Table 9 of this publication with publications prior to September 2006.

18 Following a review of the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey, a number of changes were implemented in the 2007 cycle. Users need to exercise caution when comparing estimates from 2007 with previous years' data. The changes are documented in paragraphs 19 to 22 of the Explanatory Notes.

19 Between September 2001 and September 2006, people who reported in the LFS that they were 'Permanently not intending to work' were not asked questions about wanting to work and looking for work in the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey. As such, these people were classified as 'Did not want to work'. It is likely, however, that if they had been asked these questions, then some of these people may have been classified differently and may have been included in one of the 'Wanted to work' categories. From September 2007, people who specified that they were 'Permanently not intending to work' were asked questions about wanting to work and looking for work. As a result of this change, there has been a break in time series. Users need to exercise caution when comparing estimates from 2007 and 2008 with previous years' data.

20 Prior to September 2007, the data items, 'All reasons for not actively looking for work', 'Main reason for not actively looking for work' and 'Main reason not available to start work within four weeks' included the category 'Own ill health, physical disability or pregnancy'. From September 2007, this category has been split into three separate categories: 'Own short-term illness or injury', 'Own long-term health condition or disability' and 'Pregnancy'.

21 Prior to September 2007, the data items, 'Reason for ceasing last job' and 'Main activity when not in the labour force' included the categories 'Own ill-health or injury' and 'Own disability or handicap'. From September 2007, these categories were renamed to ensure they were consistent with those in other data items and have been collected as 'Own short-term illness or injury' and 'Own long-term

health condition or disability' respectively. While the way interviewers were instructed to code the responses to the relevant categories did not conceptually change, the renaming has caused a break in time series. Users need to exercise caution when comparing estimates from 2007 with previous years' data.

22 From September 2007, a new data item, 'All reasons not available to start work within four weeks', has been collected in addition to 'Main reason not available to start work within four weeks'.

23 Prior to September 2008, the data item 'Main activity when not in the labour force' included the category 'Home duties or caring for children'. From September 2008, this category has been split into two separate categories, 'Home duties' and 'Caring for children'. Care should be taken in interpreting the data in these categories because some people with young children indicated that 'Home duties' was their main activity when not in the labour force, rather than 'Caring for children'.

24 From September 2009, a new response category, 'Believes ill-health or disability discourages employers' has been included in the data items 'Main reason not actively looking for work' and 'All reasons not actively looking for work'. This category is not presented in this publication, however, is available on request.

25 From September 2009, 'Believes ill-health or disability discourages employers' together with 'No jobs in suitable hours' are now included with other responses to derive the population group 'Discouraged job seekers'. Prior to September 2009, 'No jobs in suitable hours' was included in the category, 'Other'. As a result of this change, there is a break in time series and users need to exercise care when comparing estimates from 2009 with previous years' data. The following table compares categories affected by the change between 2008 and 2009.

PERSONS WITH MARGINAL ATTACHMENT NOT ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR WORK

	2010		2009		2008	
	'000	%	'000	%	'000	%
Discouraged jobseekers	102.1	12.0	111.8	14.9	73.9	9.9
Believes ill health or disability discourages employers (from 2009)	*2.9	*0.3	*5.8	*0.8	-	-
No jobs in suitable hours (from 2009)	10.1	1.2	10.5	1.4	-	-
Other reasons	748.9	88.0	711.6	94.9	676.1	90.1
Personal reasons	373.4	43.9	348.3	46.4	323.5	43.1
Family reasons	242.4	28.5	231.7	30.9	226.7	30.2
No jobs in suitable hours (prior to 2008)	-	-	-	-	*7.6	*1.0
Other reasons	63.9	7.5	64.8	8.6	61.8	8.2
Had a job to go to	59.6	7.0	52.5	7.0	47.0	6.3
Did not know	9.5	1.1	14.2	1.9	9.6	1.3
Total	851.0	100.0	823.4	100.0	750.0	100.0

* estimate is subject to sampling variability too high for most practical purposes
 - nil or rounded to zero (including null cells)

26 From September 2009, the method used to determine whether a respondent prefers full-time or part-time work has changed. In 2009, respondents were asked the number of hours they would prefer to work, whereas in previous years, they were asked whether they would prefer to work full-time or part-time. A new data item 'Preferred number of hours' is also now available. Both data items apply only to people who intend to enter the labour force in the next 12 months. As a result of this change, there is a break in time series and users need to exercise care when comparing the estimates in Table 5 of this publication with publications prior to September 2009.

COMPARABILITY WITH MONTHLY LFS STATISTICS

27 Due to differences in the scope and sample size of this supplementary survey and that of the LFS, the estimation procedure may lead to some small variations between labour force estimates from this survey and those from the LFS.

PREVIOUS SURVEYS

28 The Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey was first conducted in May 1975 and again in May 1977. From 1979 to 1987 the survey was collected twice a year (March and September). Since then it has been conducted annually in September. Results of previous surveys were published in:

- Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6220.0); and
- standard data service Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6220.0.40.001) for 1994 and 1995 (available in hardcopy only).

NEXT SURVEY

29 The ABS plans to conduct this survey again in September 2012.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

30 ABS publications draw extensively on information provided freely by individuals, businesses, governments and other organisations. Their continued cooperation is very much appreciated; without it, the wide range of statistics published by the ABS would not be available. Information received by the ABS is treated in strict confidence as required by the **Census and Statistics Act 1905**.

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Spreadsheets

31 Additional tables with time series data are released in spreadsheet format. These tables are available from the ABS website.

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

32 ABS publications which may be of interest include:

- Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0);
- Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia (cat. no. 6239.0);
- Job Search Experience, Australia (cat. no. 6222.0);
- Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001);
- Underemployed Workers, Australia (cat. no. 6265.0); and
- Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6202.0).

33 Current publications and other products released by the ABS are available from the Statistics Page on the ABS website. The ABS also issues a daily Release Advice on the website which details products to be released in the week ahead.

Glossary

GLOSSARY

Actively looking for work

People who were taking active steps to find work. Active steps comprise:

- registering with an employment agency;
- contacting an employment agency;
- contacting prospective employers;
- answering a newspaper advertisement for a job;
- checking noticeboards;
- advertising or tendering for work; and
- contacting friends or relatives.

Age of youngest child

Age of the youngest child, 12 years and under, in the household.

Available to start work within four weeks

People who were available to start work within four weeks or, for people with children aged 12 years and under, could start work within four weeks if suitable child care was available.

Did not want to work

People who were not classified as employed or unemployed who answered 'no' when asked if they would like a job.

Discouraged job seekers

People with marginal attachment to the labour force who wanted to work and were available to start work within the next four weeks but whose main reason for not actively looking for work was that they believed they would not find a job for any of the following reasons:

- considered to be too young by employers;
- considered to be too old by employers;
- believes ill health or disability discourages employers;
- lacked necessary schooling, training, skills or experience;
- difficulties because of language or ethnic background;
- no jobs in their locality or line of work;
- no jobs in suitable hours; and
- no jobs at all.

Employed

People who, during the reference week:

- worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind in a job or business, or on a farm (comprising employees, employers and own account workers); or
- worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (i.e. contributing family workers); or
- were employees who had a job but were not at work and were:
 - away from work for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week; or
 - away from work for more than four weeks up to the end of the reference week and received pay for some or all of the four week period to the end of the reference week; or
 - away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement; or
 - on strike or locked out; or
 - on workers' compensation and expected to return to their job; or
- were employers or own account workers who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.

Family

Two or more people, one of whom is at least 15 years of age, who are related by blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step or fostering; and who are usually resident in the same household. The basis of a family is formed by identifying the presence of a couple relationship, lone parent-child relationship or other blood relationship. Some households will, therefore, contain more than one family.

Family reasons for not actively looking for work

Includes ill health of someone other than themselves, caring for children and other family considerations.

Full-time preference

People who preferred to work 35 hours or more a week. Note that for the purposes of this publication, full-time preference is derived from data collected on respondents' preferred number of hours and applies to those who intended to or might enter the labour force in the next 12 months.

Full-time or part-time status of last job

The perception of people of whether they worked full-time or part-time in their last job.

Future starters

People waiting to start, within four weeks of the end of the reference week, a new job that they have already obtained (and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then). Under International Labour Organisation (ILO) guidelines, these persons do not have to be actively looking for work to be classified as unemployed.

Had a job to go to

People who were waiting to start a job, but would not be starting within four weeks. Also includes people who had a job but, up to the end of the reference week, had been away from work without pay for four weeks or longer and had not been actively looking for work.

Intention to enter the labour force in the next 12 months

The intention of people to work or look for work in the 12 months following the interview.

Job

Any employment, full-time or part-time, lasting two weeks or more.

Labour force

The civilian population can be split into two mutually exclusive groups: the labour force (employed and unemployed people) and persons not in the labour force.

Left a job

People who are classified as voluntarily ceasing their last job.

Lost a job

People who are classified as involuntarily ceasing their last job.

Main activity when not in the labour force

The main activity of people who are not in the labour force since they last worked or looked for work (or in the last year if they haven't worked in that time).

Marginal attachment to the labour force

People who were not in the labour force in the reference week, wanted to work and:

- were actively looking for work but did not meet the availability criterion to be classified as unemployed; or
- were not actively looking for work but were available to start work within four weeks.

The criteria for determining those in the labour force are based on activity (i.e. working or looking for work) and availability to start work during the reference week. The criteria associated with marginal attachment to the labour force, in particular the concepts of wanting to work and reasons for not actively looking for work, are more subjective. Hence, the measurement against these criteria is affected by the respondent's own interpretation of the concepts used. An individual respondent's interpretation may be affected by their work aspirations, as well as family, economic and other commitments.

For more information see **Labour Force, Australia (6202.0)** [Understanding the Australian Labour Force Using ABS Statistics](#).

Main English-speaking countries

The list of main English-speaking countries provided here is not an attempt to classify countries on the basis of whether or not English is the predominant or official language of each country. It is a list of the main countries from which Australia receives, or has received, significant numbers of overseas settlers who are likely to speak English. These countries comprise the United Kingdom, the Republic of Ireland, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and the United States of America.

Occupation of last job

An occupation is a collection of jobs that are sufficiently similar in their title and tasks, skill level and skill specialisation which are grouped together for the purposes of classification. In this publication, occupation refers to Major Group as defined by [ANZSCO-Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations, First Edition, Revision 1](#) (cat. no. 1220.0) and relates to persons who have had a job less than 20 years ago only.

Part-time preference

People who preferred to work one to 34 hours a week. Note that for the purposes of this publication, part-time preference is derived from data collected on respondents' preferred number of hours and applies to those who intended to or might enter the labour force in the next 12 months.

Personal reasons for not actively looking for work

Includes 'own short-term illness or injury' or 'long-term health condition or disability', 'pregnancy', 'attending an educational institution', 'had no need to work', 'welfare payments or pension may be affected', and 'moved house or on holidays'.

Persons in the labour force

People who were classified as being in the labour force, that is, either employed or unemployed.

Persons not in the labour force

People who were not in the categories 'employed' or 'unemployed' as defined.

Persons not in the labour force because they were caring for children

People who wanted to work and:

- were not actively looking for work because they were caring for children, but were available to start work within four weeks; or
- were not actively looking for work and reported that they were not available to start work within four weeks because they were caring for children.

Preferred number of hours

The number of hours people, who intend to enter the labour force in the next 12 months, would like to work each week.

Reference week

The week preceding the week in which the interview was conducted.

Status in employment of last job

People who had a job in the last 20 years classified by whether they were employees, employers, own account workers, contributing family workers or unpaid voluntary workers in their last job.

Time since last job

The elapsed time since ceasing the last job.

Unemployed

People aged 15 years and over who were not employed during the reference week, and:

- had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and were available for work in the reference week; or
- were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.

Wanted to work

People not in the labour force who were not actively looking for work who answered 'yes' or 'maybe' when asked if they would like a job, as well as those people not in the labour force who were actively looking. It is assumed these people want a job as they are actively looking.

Abbreviations

ABBREVIATIONS

'000	thousand
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ANZSCO	Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations
cat. no.	Catalogue number
ILO	International Labour Organization
LFS	Labour Force Survey
RSE	relative standard error
SACC	Standard Australian Classification of Countries
SE	standard error

Populations and data items list (Appendix)

APPENDIX 1 POPULATIONS AND DATA ITEMS LIST

DATA AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

The ABS has a range of data available on request from the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey. This section lists the data items and populations which relate to the survey. More detailed breakdowns of some data items may also be available on request.

The population(s) for a particular data item refers to the person in the survey to whom the data item relates.

For more information about ABS data available on request, telephone (02) 6252 7400, or email <information.consultancy@abs.gov.au>.

Population 1:

Persons not in the labour force

Population 2:

Persons not in the labour force who wanted to work

Population 3:

Persons not in the labour force with marginal attachment to the labour force

Population 4:

Persons not in the labour force who wanted to work but were not actively looking for work and were available to start work within four weeks

Population 5:

Persons not in the labour force who were discouraged job seekers

Population 6:

Persons not in the labour force who wanted to work but were not actively looking for work and were not available to start work within four weeks

Population 7:

Persons not in the labour force because they were caring for children, who wanted to work but not actively looking for work

Population 8:

Persons not in the labour force who previously had a job

Population 9:

Persons not in the labour force without marginal attachment to the labour force

Population 10:

Persons not in the labour force whose last job was less than 20 years ago

Data items		Populations
1	State or territory of usual residence	All
	New South Wales	
	Victoria	
	Queensland	
	South Australia	
	Western Australia	
	Tasmania	
	Northern Territory	
	Australian Capital Territory	
2	Area of usual residence	All
	State capital city	
	Balance of state/territory	
3	Region of usual residence	All
	Standard labour force dissemination regions	
4	Sex	All
	Males	
	Females	
5	Marital status	All
	Married	
	Not married	
6	Relationship in household	All
	Family member	
	Husband, wife or partner	
	With dependants	
	Without dependants	
	Lone parent	
	With dependants	
	Without dependants	
	Dependent student	
	Non-dependent child	
	Other related individual	
	Non-family member	
	Lone person	

	Not living alone	
	Relationship not determined	
7A	Country of birth and period of arrival	All
	Born in Australia	
	Born overseas	
	Arrived before 1971	
	Arrived 1971-1980	
	Arrived 1981-1990	
	Arrived 1991-2000	
	Arrived 2001 to survey date	
7B	Country of birth (1)	All
	Born in Australia	
	Born overseas	
	Born in main English-speaking countries	
	Born in other than main English-speaking countries	
7C	Country of birth (2)	All
	Born in Australia	
	Born overseas	
	Oceania and Antarctica	
	North-West Europe	
	Southern and Eastern Europe	
	North Africa and the Middle East	
	South-East Asia	
	North-East Asia	
	Southern and Central Asia	
	Americas	
	Sub-Saharan Africa	
8	Age group (years)	All
	15-19	
	20-24	
	25-34	
	35-44	
	45-54	
	55-59	
	60-64	
	65-69	
	70 and over	
	Note: Age collected in single years	
9	Full-time study status (15-24 year olds)	All
	Were full-time students	
	Were not full-time students	
	Did not know	
10A	Persons not in the labour force summary variable	1, 8, 10
	With marginal attachment to the labour force	
	Wanted to work and were actively looking for work	
	Were available to start work within four weeks	
	Were not available to start work within four weeks	
	Wanted to work but were not actively looking for work and were available to start work within four weeks	
	Discouraged job seekers	
	Other	
	Without marginal attachment to the labour force	
	Wanted to work but were not actively looking for work and were not available to start work within four weeks	
	Did not want to work	
	Permanently unable to work	
10B	Marginal attachment summary variable	3
	Wanted to work and were actively looking for work	
	Were available to start work within four weeks	
	Were not available to start work within four weeks	
	Wanted to work but were not actively looking for work and were available to start work within four weeks	
	Discouraged job seekers	
	Other	
11	Whether wanted to work	1, 8, 10
	Wanted to work	
	Might want to work	
	Did not want to work	
	Did not know	
	Permanently unable to work	
12	Whether looked for work in the last 12 months	All
	Had looked for work	
	Less than 5 weeks ago	
	5 weeks and less than 8 weeks ago	
	8 weeks and less than 13 weeks ago	
	13-52 weeks ago	
	13 weeks and less than 26 weeks ago	
	26 weeks and less than 39 weeks ago	
	39-52 weeks ago	
	Had not looked for work	
13	Main activity when not in the labour force	All
	Retired or voluntarily inactive	
	Home duties	
	Caring for children	
	Attending an educational institution	
	Own long-term health condition or disability	
	Own short-term illness or injury	
	Looking after ill or disabled person	
	Travel, holiday or leisure activity	
	Working in unpaid voluntary job	
	Other	
14A	Time since last job	All
	Had a job	
	Under 12 months	
	1 week and under 4 weeks	
	4 weeks and under 8 weeks	
	8 weeks and under 13 weeks	
	13 weeks and under 26 weeks	
	26 weeks and under 39 weeks	
	39 weeks and under 52 weeks	
	1 year and under 3 years	

	3 years and under 10 years	
	3 years and under 5 years	
	5 years and under 10 years	
	10 years or more	
	10 years and under 20 years	
	20 years or more	
	Never had a job	
14B	Whether had a job in the last 20 years	All
	Had a job	
	Last job less than 20 years ago	
	Last job 20 or more years ago	
	Never had a job	
15	Reason for ceasing last job	All
	Had a job	
	Lost a job	
	Retrenched, made redundant, employer went out of business, dismissed, no work was available	
	Job was temporary or seasonal	
	Own short-term illness or injury	
	Own business closed down for economic reasons	
	Left a job	
	Unsatisfactory work arrangements	
	Retired, did not want to work any longer	
	Own long-term health condition or disability	
	Returned to studies	
	Pregnancy or to have children	
	To get married	
	To look after family, house or someone else	
	To have holidays, moved house or spouse transferred	
	Own business closed down for other than economic reasons	
	Other	
	Never had a job	
16	Occupation in last job	All
	Last job less than 20 years ago	
	Managers	
	Professionals	
	Technicians and trades workers	
	Community and personal service workers	
	Clerical and administrative workers	
	Sales workers	
	Machinery operators and drivers	
	Labourers	
	Last job 20 or more years ago	
	Never had a job	
17A	Status in employment in last job (1)	All
	Last job less than 20 years ago	
	Employer	
	Own account worker	
	Employee	
	Contributing family worker	
	Unpaid voluntary worker	
	Last job 20 or more years ago	
	Never had a job	
17B	Status in employment in last job (2)	All
	Last job less than 20 years ago	
	Employee	
	Own account worker/Employer	
	Other	
	Last job 20 or more years ago	
	Never had a job	
18	Full-time or part-time status in last job	All
	Last job less than 20 years ago	
	Full-time	
	Part-time	
	Varied/Did not know	
	Last job 20 or more years ago	
	Never had a job	
19A	Intention to enter the labour force	All
	Intended to enter	
	Might enter	
	Did not intend to enter	
	Did not know	
	Permanently unable to work	
	Not Applicable (full-time student)	
19B	Intention to enter the labour force in the next 12 months	All
	Intended to enter	
	Might enter	
	Did not intend to enter	
	Did not know	
	Permanently unable to work	
20	Full-time or part-time preference	All
	Full-time	
	Part-time	
	Did not know	
	Not intending to work	
21	Main reason for not actively looking for work	4
	Wanted to work and were actively looking for work	
	Were available to start work within four weeks	
	Were not available to start work within four weeks	
	Wanted to work but were not actively looking for work and were available to start work within four weeks	
	Discouraged job seekers	
	Considered too young by employers	
	Considered too old by employers	
	Believes ill health or disability discourages employers	
	Lacked the necessary schooling, training, skills or experience	
	Difficulties because of language or ethnic background	
	No jobs in locality or line of work	
	No jobs in suitable hours	
	No jobs at all	

	Other reasons	
	Personal reasons	
	Own short-term illness or injury	
	Own long-term health condition or disability	
	Pregnancy	
	Attending an educational institution	
	Had no need to work	
	Welfare payments or pension may be affected	
	Moved house or holidays	
	Family reasons	
	Ill health of other than self	
	Caring for children	
	No child care in locality	
	No child care available at all	
	Cost or too expensive	
	Booked out or no places available	
	Children too young or too old	
	Prefers to look after children	
	Quality of child care unsuitable	
	Other reasons	
	Other family considerations	
	Other reasons	
	Had a job to go to	
	Did not know	
22	All reasons for not actively looking for work	4
	Discouraged job seekers	
	Considered too young by employers	
	Considered too old by employers	
	Believes disability discourages employers	
	Lacked the necessary schooling, training, skills or experience	
	Difficulties because of language or ethnic background	
	No jobs in locality or line of work	
	No job in suitable hours	
	No jobs at all	
	Other reasons	
	Personal reasons	
	Own short-term illness or injury	
	Own long-term health condition or disability	
	Pregnancy	
	Attending an educational institution	
	Had no need to work	
	Welfare payments or pension may be affected	
	Moved house or holidays	
	Family reasons	
	Ill health of other than self	
	Caring for children	
	Other family considerations	
	Other reasons	
	Had a job to go to	
	Did not know	
23	Main reason not working due to caring for children	7
	No child care in locality	
	No child care available at all	
	Cost or too expensive	
	Booked out or no places available	
	Children too young or too old	
	Prefers to look after children	
	Quality of child care unsuitable	
	Other child care reasons	
24	Main reason not available to start work within four weeks	6
	Personal reasons	
	Own short-term illness or injury	
	Own long-term health condition or disability	
	Pregnancy	
	Studying or returning to studies	
	Moved house or holidays	
	Family reasons	
	Ill health of other than self	
	Unable to find suitable child care	
	Children too young or preferred to look after children	
	On a job-related training program	
	Other reasons	
25	All reasons not available to start work within four weeks	6
	Personal reasons	
	Own short-term illness or injury	
	Own long-term health condition or disability	
	Pregnancy	
	Studying or returning to studies	
	Moved house or holidays	
	Family reasons	
	Ill health of other than self	
	Caring for children	
	On a job-related training program	
	Other reasons	
26	Age of youngest child	7
	0-2 years	
	3-4 years	
	5 years	
	6-9 years	
	10-12 years	
27	Number of children	7
	Aged 0-2 years	
	Aged 3-4 years	
	Aged 5 years	
	Aged 6-9 years	
	Aged 10-12 years	
28	Preferred number of hours	All
	1-15 hours	

16-29 hours
30-34 hours
35-39 hours
40 hours
41-44 hours
45-48 hours
49 hours or more
Did not know
Not intending to work

Supplementary surveys list (Appendix)

APPENDIX 2 SUPPLEMENTARY SURVEYS LIST

SUPPLEMENTARY SURVEYS

The Monthly Population Survey program and Multi-Purpose Household Survey program collect data on particular aspects of the labour force. The following is an historical list of labour surveys collected in these programs. Data from these surveys are available on request and can be obtained by contacting the ABS.

	cat. no.	Frequency	Latest issue
Monthly Population Supplementary Surveys			
Childhood Education and Care, Australia	4402.0	Irregular	June 2008
Child Employment, Australia	6211.0	Irregular	June 2006
Education and Work, Australia	6227.0	Annual	May 2011
Employee Earnings, Benefits, and Trade Union Membership, Australia	6310.0	Annual	August 2010
Forms of Employment, Australia	6359.0	Annual	November 2010
Job Search Experience, Australia	6222.0	Annual	July 2011
Labour Force Experience, Australia	6206.0	Biennial	February 2011
Characteristics of Recent Migrants, Australia(a)	6250.0	Irregular	November 2010
Labour Mobility, Australia	6209.0	Biennial	February 2010
Locations of Work, Australia	6275.0	Irregular	November 2008
Multiple Jobholding, Australia(b)	6216.0	Irregular	August 1997
Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia	6220.0	Annual	September 2011
Underemployed Workers, Australia	6265.0	Annual	September 2011
Working Time Arrangements, Australia(c)	6342.0	Irregular	November 2009
Multi-Purpose Household Surveys			
Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia	6239.0	Biennial	2010-2011
Retirement and Retirement Intentions, Australia	6238.0	Biennial	2010-2011
Work-Related Injuries, Australia	6324.0	Irregular	2009-2010

(a) This product replaces the publication Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Migrants, Australia (cat. no. 6250.0).

(b) Latest data available on request July 2001.

(c) This product replaces the publication Working Arrangements, Australia (cat. no. 6340.0).

Quality Declaration - Summary

QUALITY DECLARATION - SUMMARY

INSTITUTIONAL ENVIRONMENT

For information on the institutional environment of the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), including the legislative obligations of the ABS, financing and governance arrangements, and mechanisms for scrutiny of ABS operations, please see ABS Institutional Environment.

RELEVANCE

Persons Not in the Labour Force are people who are neither employed nor unemployed in a particular reference period. They can be divided into two groups, those with marginal attachment to the labour force and those without marginal attachment to the labour force.

Persons are considered marginally attached to the labour force if they:

- want to work and are actively looking for work but are not available to start work in the reference week; or
- want to work and are not actively looking for work but are available to start work within four weeks.

Persons are considered not marginally attached to the labour force if they:

- did not want to work; or
- want to work, but were not actively looking for work and were not available to start work within four weeks; or
- were permanently unable to work.

The Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey collects a range of information about people not in the labour force, including the reasons why they were not actively looking for work or were not available for work, their main activity while not in the labour force,

whether they have worked previously and if so, time since their last job, occupation in their last job and the reasons for ceasing their last job.

Numbers derived from Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey contribute to measures of the Extended labour force underutilisation rate.

TIMELINESS

The Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey is conducted annually during September as a supplement to the monthly Labour Force Survey. Results from this survey are released approximately six months after the completion of enumeration (i.e. during March) in the publication, Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6220.0).

ACCURACY

Estimates from the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey are subject to sampling and non-sampling errors. Relative standard error (RSE) is a measure of the size of the sampling error affecting an estimate, i.e. the error introduced by basing estimates on a sample of the population rather than the full population. Non-sampling errors are inaccuracies that occur due to imperfections in reporting by respondents and interviewers, and errors made in coding and processing data.

The Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey was designed primarily to provide estimates at the Australia level. Broad estimates are available for State or Territory of usual residence. Users should exercise caution when using estimates at this level because of the presence of high sampling errors. RSEs are available for all estimates in the Technical Note of the publication.

COHERENCE

While the Labour Force Survey provides the official estimate of persons not in the labour force, the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey provides further information on the characteristics of these people. Summary information is also collected in the Labour Force Survey on a quarterly basis, however this information is restricted to marginally attached people who had actively looked for work but were not available to start in the reference week but were available within four weeks. The Census of Population and Housing, and Special Social Surveys also provide summary information on persons not in the labour force, however the scope and methodology used differs from Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey. Information about the characteristics of people not in the labour force is also published in Barriers and Incentives to Labour Force Participation, Australia (cat. no. 6239.0).

The conceptual framework used for this survey is described in Chapter 7 of Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001). The statistics in this survey are comparable with other labour statistics produced by the ABS. The ABS definition of persons not in the labour force is consistent with the International Labour Organisation definition adopted in 1982.

The ABS conducted the first Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey in May 1975, and again in May 1977. From 1979 to 1987 the survey was collected twice a year (March and September). Since then it has been conducted annually in September.

Key changes made to Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey include:

- revision of population benchmarks
- changes in the scope of the survey
- revision of data items.

For more information on changes to the survey see Chapter 21.10 of Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods (cat. no. 6102.0.55.001), and also the explanatory note section of the annual publication.

INTERPRETABILITY

The Persons Not in the Labour Force publication contains tables with footnoted data and a Summary of Findings to aid interpretation of the results of the survey. Detailed Explanatory Notes, a Technical Note and a Glossary are also included providing information on the terminology, classifications and other technical aspects associated with these statistics.

Further commentary is often available through articles and data published in other ABS products, including:

- Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0) - refer to the 'Articles and Analysis' chapter for articles.
- Australian Social Trends (cat. no. 4102.0)
- Year Book, Australia (cat. no. 1301.0) - refer to the 'Labour' chapter.

ACCESSIBILITY

Persons Not in the Labour Force, Australia (cat. no. 6220.0) is released electronically via the ABS website as a PDF publication. Additional data may be available on request (subject to data quality). For a list of data items available see Appendix 1 of the publication. Note that detailed data can be subject to high relative standard errors, and in some cases, may result in data being confidentialised.

Additional tables in spreadsheet format with time series data are also available from the ABS website.

The Extended Labour Underutilisation rate is published annually in the April issue of Australian Labour Market Statistics (cat. no. 6105.0), and within Measures of Australia's Progress: Summary Indicators (cat. no. 1383.0.55.001).

For further information about these or related statistics, contact the National Information and Referral Centre on 1300 135 070 or the Labour Market Statistics section in Canberra on (02) 6252 7206, or via email to <labour.statistics@abs.gov.au>.

Quality Declaration - Relevance

EMPLOYED

People aged 15 years and over who, during the reference week:

- worked for one hour or more for pay, profit, commission or payment in kind, in a job or business or on a farm (comprising employees, employers and own account workers); or
- worked for one hour or more without pay in a family business or on a farm (i.e. contributing family workers); or
- were employees who had a job but were not at work and were:
 - away from work for less than four weeks up to the end of the reference week; or
 - away from work for more than four weeks up to the end of the reference week and received pay for some or all of the four-week period to the end of the reference week; or
 - away from work as a standard work or shift arrangement; or
 - on strike or locked out; or
 - on workers' compensation and expected to return to their job; or
- were employers or own account workers who had a job, business or farm, but were not at work.

UNEMPLOYED

People aged 15 years and over who were not employed during the reference week, and:

- had actively looked for full-time or part-time work at any time in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and were available for work in the reference week; or
- were waiting to start a new job within four weeks from the end of the reference week and could have started in the reference week if the job had been available then.

MARGINAL ATTACHMENT TO THE LABOUR FORCE

The criteria for determining those in the labour force are based on activity (i.e. working or looking for work) and availability to start work during the reference week. The criteria associated with marginal attachment to the labour force, in particular the concepts of wanting to work and reasons for not actively looking for work, are more subjective. Hence, the measurement against these criteria is affected by the respondent's own interpretation of the concepts used. An individual respondent's interpretation may be affected by their work aspirations, as well as family, economic and other commitments.

ACTIVELY LOOKING FOR WORK

People who were taking active steps to find work. Active steps comprise:

- registering with an employment agency
- contacting an employment agency
- contacting prospective employers
- answering a newspaper advertisement for a job
- checking noticeboards
- advertising or tendering for work
- contacting friends or relatives.

AVAILABILITY TO START WORK WITHIN FOUR WEEKS

Refers to whether people were available to start work within four weeks or, for people with children aged 12 years and under, whether they could start work within four weeks if suitable child care was available.

Quality Declaration - Coherence

Key changes made to Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey include:

REVISION OF POPULATION BENCHMARKS

Revisions are made approximately 5 yearly to population benchmarks for the Labour Force Survey and Supplementary Surveys to take into account the Census of Population and Housing. Estimates since 2010 incorporate revised Net Overseas Migration estimates, published in the September 2008 and September 2009 issues of Australian Demographic Statistics (cat. no. 3101.0). For further details on population benchmarks, see Labour Force Survey (cat. no. 6202.0).

CHANGES IN THE SCOPE OF THE SURVEY

Persons Not in the Labour Force Surveys conducted up to and including September 1987 included all people aged 15 years and over. From September 1988 to September 2004, the survey excluded all people aged 70 years and over.

The scope of the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey was expanded in September 2005 to include all people aged 15 years and over. This change resulted in about 1.6 million extra people coming within the scope of this survey. Users need to exercise care when comparing the estimates prior to 2005 with subsequent years. Direct comparisons should only be made where the populations are the same.

CHANGE IN THE CLASSIFICATION OF PEOPLE 'PERMANENTLY NOT INTENDING TO WORK'

From September 2007, people who specified that they were 'permanently not intending to work' were asked questions about wanting to work and looking for work. However previously, between 2001 and 2006 this group were not asked further questions about looking for work and wanting to work in Persons Not in the Labour Force survey.

Between 2001 and 2006 people who reported in the LFS that they were 'permanently not intending to work' were not asked questions about wanting to work and looking for work in the Persons Not in the Labour Force Survey. As such, these people were classified as 'Did not want to work'. It is likely, however, that if they had been asked these questions, then some of these people may have been classified differently and may have been included in one of the 'wanted to work' categories. From September 2007, people who specified that they were 'permanently not intending to work' were asked questions about wanting to work and looking for work.

REVISION OF DATA ITEMS

Due to revisions to the following data items, users should exercise care when comparing data between years. The following is a list of changes to PNILF over time.

From September 2006, estimates of the number of people not in the labour force because they were caring for children, include people whose youngest child was aged 12 years and under. Previously questions relating to the care of children were only asked of people with children aged 11 years and under. This change was made to ensure consistency with other ABS surveys.

Prior to September 2007, the data items 'All reasons for not actively looking for work', 'Main reason for not actively looking for work' and 'Main reason not available to start work within four weeks' included the category 'own ill health, physical disability or pregnancy'. From September 2007, this category has been split into three separate categories; 'own short-term illness or injury', 'own long-term health condition or disability' and 'pregnancy'.

Prior to September 2007, the data items 'Reason for ceasing last job' and 'Main activity when not in the labour force' included the categories 'own ill-health or injury' and 'own disability or handicap'. From September 2007, these categories were renamed to ensure they were consistent with those in other data items and have been collected as 'own short-term illness or injury' and 'own long-term health condition or disability' respectively. While the way interviewers were instructed to code the responses to the relevant categories did not conceptually change, the renaming has resulted in some movement between the responses.

From September 2007, a new data item, 'All reasons not available to start work within four weeks', has been collected in addition to 'Main reason not available to start work within four weeks'.

Prior to September 2008, the data item 'Main activity when not in the labour force' included the category 'Home duties or caring for children'. From September 2008, this category has been split into two separate categories, 'Home duties' and 'Caring for children'. Care should be taken in interpreting the data in these categories because some people with young children indicated that 'Home duties' was their main activity when not in the labour force, rather than 'Caring for children'.

For the data item 'Main activity when not in the labour force' the categories presented are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For example, people one year may report that they were retired and be coded to 'Retired or voluntarily inactive', whereas in the following year people who are retired may report that their main activity when not in the labour force was home duties and be coded to 'Home duties'. The movement of data from one year to the next depend on how people interpret and respond to the question 'What has been your main activity since you last worked?'. While the categories have not conceptually changed, care should be taken when comparing estimates from 2008 with previous years' data.

From 2009, 'Full-time or part-time preference' is collected in single hours based on the number of hours a respondent preferred to work each week. A new data item 'Preferred number of hours' has also been created. Prior to September 2009, the data item 'Full-time or part-time preference' was collected based on whether a respondent wanted to work full-time or part-time.

From September 2009, a new response category 'Believes ill-health or disability discourages employers' has been added to the data items 'Main reason not actively looking for work' and 'All reasons not actively looking for work'. This output category is included in the population group 'Discouraged job seekers' which also from September 2009 includes the category 'Believes no jobs in suitable hours'.

Data quality (Technical Note)

TECHNICAL NOTE DATA QUALITY

INTRODUCTION

1 Since the estimates in this publication are based on information obtained from occupants of a sample of dwellings, they are subject to sampling variability. That is, they may differ from those estimates that would have been produced if all dwellings had been included in the survey. One measure of the likely difference is given by the standard error (SE), which indicates the extent to which an estimate might have varied by chance because only a sample of dwellings was included. There are about two chances in three (67%) that a sample estimate will differ by less than one SE from the number that would have been obtained if all dwellings had been included, and about 19 chances in 20 (95%) that the difference will be less than two SEs. Another measure of the likely difference is the relative standard error (RSE), which is obtained by expressing the SE as a percentage of the estimate.

2 Due to space limitations, it is impractical to print the SE of each estimate in the publication. Instead, a table of SEs is provided to enable readers to determine the SE for an estimate from the size of that estimate (see table T1). The SE table is derived from a mathematical model, referred to as the 'SE model', which is created using data from a number of past Labour Force Surveys. It should be noted that the SE model only gives an approximate value for the SE for any particular estimate since there is some minor variation between SEs for different estimates of the same size.

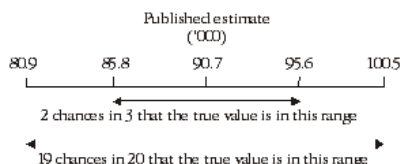
3 Due to sample reduction/reinstatement, the sample size of the Labour Force Survey (LFS) and supplementary surveys has varied from July 2008. Detailed information about the sample reduction/re-instatement is provided in **Information Paper: Labour Force Survey. Sample Design, Nov 2007 (Third edition)** (cat. no. 6269.0).

CALCULATION OF STANDARD ERROR

4 An example of the calculation and the use of SEs in relation to estimates of persons is as follows. Table 1 shows that the estimated number of people in Australia who were discouraged job seekers was 90,700. Since the estimate is between 50,000 and 100,000, table T1 shows that the SE for Australia will lie between 3,850 and 5,100 and can be approximated by interpolation using the following general formula:

$$\begin{aligned} & \text{SE of estimate} \\ &= \text{lower SE} + \left(\left(\frac{\text{size of estimate} - \text{lower estimate}}{\text{upper estimate} - \text{lower estimate}} \right) \times (\text{upper SE} - \text{lower SE}) \right) \\ &= 3,850 + \left(\left(\frac{90,700 - 50,000}{100,000 - 50,000} \right) \times (5,100 - 3,850) \right) \\ &= 4,900 \text{ (rounded to the nearest 100)} \end{aligned}$$

5 Therefore, there are about two chances in three that the value that would have been produced if all dwellings had been included in the survey will fall within the range 85,800 to 95,600 and about 19 chances in 20 that the value will fall within the range 80,900 to 100,500. This example is illustrated in the following diagram.



6 In general, the size of the SE increases as the size of the estimate increases. Conversely, the RSE decreases as the size of the estimate increases. Very small estimates are thus subject to such high RSEs that their value for most practical purposes is unreliable. In the tables in this publication, only estimates with RSEs of 25% or less are considered reliable for most purposes. Estimates with RSEs greater than 25% but less than or equal to 50% are preceded by an asterisk (e.g.*3.2) to indicate they are subject to high SEs and should be used with caution. Estimates with RSEs of greater than 50%, preceded by a double asterisk (e.g.**0.4), are considered too unreliable for general use and should only be used to aggregate with other estimates to provide derived estimates with RSEs of less than 25%.

PROPORTIONS AND PERCENTAGES

7 Proportions and percentages formed from the ratio of two estimates are also subject to sampling errors. The size of the error depends on the accuracy of both the numerator and the denominator. A formula to approximate the RSE of a proportion is given below. This formula is only valid when x is a subset of y.

$$RSE\left(\frac{x}{y}\right) = \sqrt{[RSE(x)]^2 + [RSE(y)]^2}$$

8 Considering the example above, of the 90,700 people who were discouraged job seekers, 52,400 or 57.8% were females. The SE of 52,400 may be calculated by interpolation as 3,900. To convert this to an RSE we express the SE as a percentage of the estimate, or 3,900/52,400=7.4%. The SE for 90,700 was calculated previously as 4,900 which converted to an RSE is 4,900/90,700=5.4%. Applying the above formula, the RSE of the proportion is:

$$RSE = \sqrt{(7.4)^2 + (5.4)^2} = 9.1\%$$

9 Therefore, the SE for the proportion of discouraged job seekers who were females is 3.0 percentage points (=9.1/100x5.1). Therefore, there are about two chances in three that the proportion of females who were discouraged job seekers was between 54.8% and 60.8% and 19 chances in 20 that the proportion is within the range 51.8% to 63.8%.

DIFFERENCES

10 Published estimates may also be used to calculate the difference between two survey estimates (of numbers or percentages). Such an estimate is subject to sampling error. The sampling error of the difference between two estimates depends on their SEs and the relationship (correlation) between them. An approximate SE of the difference between two estimates (x-y) may be calculated by the following formula:

$$SE(x-y) = \sqrt{[SE(x)]^2 + [SE(y)]^2}$$

11 While this formula will only be exact for differences between separate and uncorrelated characteristics or subpopulations, it is expected to provide a good approximation for all differences likely to be of interest in this publication.

STANDARD ERRORS

T1 STANDARD ERRORS OF ESTIMATES

Size of estimate (persons)	NSW no.	Vic. no.	Qld no.	SA no.	WA no.	Tas. no.	NT no.	ACT no.	AUST.	
									SE	RSE
									no.	no.
100	160	170	150	150	160	110	100	90	110	110.0
200	270	270	240	220	240	160	140	160	200	100.0
300	350	340	310	280	310	200	170	200	270	90.0
500	470	460	430	360	410	250	210	270	390	78.0
700	580	560	520	420	490	290	250	320	490	70.0
1,000	710	680	640	490	580	340	290	370	620	62.0
1,500	880	830	800	590	700	400	360	430	790	52.7
2,000	1 030	960	930	670	800	440	420	470	930	46.5
2,500	1 150	1 050	1 050	750	900	500	450	500	1 050	42.0
3,000	1 250	1 150	1 150	800	950	500	500	500	1 150	38.3
3,500	1 350	1 250	1 200	850	1 000	550	550	550	1 250	35.7
4,000	1 450	1 350	1 300	900	1 050	550	600	550	1 350	33.8
5,000	1 600	1 450	1 400	1 000	1 150	600	700	650	1 550	31.0
7,000	1 850	1 700	1 650	1 100	1 350	700	900	750	1 800	25.7
10,000	2 150	1 950	1 900	1 250	1 500	850	1 250	950	2 100	21.0
15,000	2 500	2 300	2 200	1 500	1 750	1 050	1 750	1 250	2 500	16.7
20,000	2 800	2 550	2 400	1 700	2 000	1 250	2 200	1 500	2 800	14.0
30,000	3 200	2 900	2 750	2 100	2 500	1 550	3 050	1 850	3 250	10.8
40,000	3 550	3 200	3 150	2 450	3 000	1 750	3 750	2 050	3 550	8.9
50,000	3 850	3 550	3 500	2 750	3 400	2 000	4 400	2 200	3 850	7.7
100,000	5 400	5 100	5 100	3 900	5 000	2 700	6 800	2 500	5 100	5.1
150,000	6 850	6 550	6 450	4 700	6 150	3 250	8 600	2 500	6 050	4.0
200,000	8 200	7 800	7 600	5 350	7 050	3 650	..	..	6 950	3.5
300,000	10 350	9 900	9 300	6 300	8 500	4 250	..	..	8 450	2.8
500,000	13 350	13 300	11 800	7 550	10 500	5 050	..	..	11 050	2.2
1,000,000	17 850	19 600	15 450	9 400	13 600	..	..	..	16 350	1.6
2,000,000	22 250	28 350	19 200	11 200	16 950	..	..	..	23 700	1.2
5,000,000	26 700	45 150	23 500	..	..	..	..	..	34 200	0.7
10,000,000	28 300	63 050	..	..	..	..	..	..	41 050	0.4
15,000,000	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	44 050	0.3

.. not applicable

T2 LEVELS AT WHICH ESTIMATES HAVE RELATIVE STANDARD ERRORS OF 25% AND 50%(a)

Percentage	NSW no.	Vic. no.	Qld. no.	SA no.	WA no.	Tas. no.	NT no.	ACT no.	Australia no.
RSE of 25%	7 700	6 600	6 300	3 300	4 500	1 700	1 400	1 800	7 300
RSE of 50%	2 100	1 800	1 700	1 000	1 300	500	400	600	1 700

(a) Refers to the number of people contributing to the estimate.